

Apr. 19th
Germany

Darling,

* * * * *

Yesterday we were on the road all day. The country-side was clothed in a filmy haze which softened the bright sun-light. This part of Germany looks like a fairy-land. Little farms, with the apple and pear blossoms framing the red-tiled roofs, set in neat patterns over the gently-rolling green hills, broken here and there by a grove of delicate birch trees, or green pine. What a setting for the tide of human misery which thronged the road-side! Liberated workers and freed prisoners of war, mostly men, but also many women streamed past us as we rode, like a movie reel. Russians, Poles, Italians, French, Dutch, and Belgians, dressed in scraps of uniforms, patched work-clothes, rags and tatters; carrying little or big bundles, or pushing little wheel-carts; tired and hungry; apathetic, sprawled out under the trees in little groups; trying to get back and away from the front. Many of them seem dazed, almost uncomprehending. Others, who, no doubt, have not been imprisoned and beaten long enough to have their spirit broken, laughed and waved us on. Here was freedom at last; now remained only the long and perhaps devious trip home. But most of them were thin, and old, and weary. They were as people in pain and yet asleep. What a parade of thwarted lives, of physical and spiritual agony, of human bitterness! A trickling column, two hundred miles long.

And past them in big lorries rolled the convoys of German prisoners, going back to their cages to loaf away the remainder of the war, safe and well fed. The prisoners ride, the liberated allies walk. There are good reasons, of course, but war is strange, isn't it?

In the little farming towns where the war swept by and left them unscathed, the German people go about their business; fat, rosy-cheeked kids play and wave at us, though we wave not at them; women wash and shop, and chat, and watch the kind-hearted, soft Americans go by with scant concern; and saucy girls smile and wiggle just a little at the G.I.'s -- girls who last night warmed the bed of an S.S. trooper. (Non-fraternization is more than a policy:- it is a military safeguard. Not a few G.I.'s have followed these Lorelei into their houses, and have met death and oblivion in the dark.) These apparently happy and unconcerned people view the straggling refugees with little interest and no compassion. It is, perhaps, of no importance, for are they not just slaves?

And from these little towns came the men who are the para-troopers and gestapo boys. And these people who smile and wave and fly their little white flags by day, by night are smuggling arms, concealing escaping prisoners and sniping at any unwary soldier.

The name of the town where now I am located I cannot tell you, of course. But it will soon burn in the hearts of men along with Lidice and Lublin. The Germans perpetrated here a human massacre so brutal as to defy belief; the evidence is complete and irrefutable; and it chills the heart to see it. There is no human crime of which they are not capable! Some day, you will read the story in the papers; I hope they publish it far and wide, though I admit that although I have seen many terrible things in this last year, I myself could scarce have the heart to tell you of it.

And so Germany lies a beautiful, apparently innocent, whore; outside, appealing and disarming; inside, disease-ridden, deceitful, and vicious. In the success of our armies and the prospect of a termination of hostilities in the near future, we have perhaps lost sight of our enemy. But here he is still, - sly, beguiling, arrogant, ambitious, and inhumanly cruel. Let some think that this war is over. It is just beginning! And if we are weak and sentimental now, armies will march again as sure as fate. We must not be fooled by their smiles, their folk-dances, their pretty countryside. We cannot afford another era of phoney peace.

We are now with an Evac. which took over a big Nazi hospital. Very comfortable and quite civilian. For the first time in over a year, I have bathroom facilities with hot and cold running water. You probably never think what a luxury it is to be able to turn a handle and have hot water run into a nice clean white basin. One takes it so for granted, until you don't have it. In Paris and Brussels there was no coal to heat water. Most English homes never had central water heating because of fuel shortage. And in Belgium and Germany, not many pipes carried water of any kind. So we turn it on and off, and wash our hands twice, just to enjoy the luxury of it!

H